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A Visit with Willy Pat Fitzgerald Willy Pat Fitzgerald, Baddeck Bay: Now I had a sawmill pretty close to the house. And there was a Petrie fellow in Middle Harbour, and he and I were terrible good friends. We worked a lot together. And he was sick. He had cancer of the spine. He got punched on a knot hauling logs out at my place. He was sitting on a log coming out of the woods on a Saturday evening, aind the mare he had • it was bare ground • she was awful wicked. She used to go fast, you know. And the sleigh hit a windfall that was across the road and jumped like that--and when he came down, he came down on a little sharp knot that was in the log and it punched him right at the end of his tailbone. Turned to cancer and killed him. And I used to go to see him pretty often. One night I was sitting up with him and he had an awful whisker. It was a Saturday night, the first night I sat up with him. And it was so severe, if you moved him you'd hear him screeching at the road. Well, if he layed right quiet it wasn't too bad. So he asked me coming on morning would I do something for him. And I said, "You bet your life I'll do something for you, if it's in my life to do it." He said, "I'd love for you to shave me." Well, first I had to clip him. He hadn't shaved for a long time. I got the comb and the scissors and I clipped him. And I got him pillowed up kind of in the bed and I cut his hair. And I shaved him and I washed him. His wife put all clean clothes on him and he looked great. And he told me he felt 90% better. And then, he asked me, "Do you have any wide boards at the mill?" I said, "I haven't any wide boards sawed out but I have logs there that would make wide boards." He said, "I want you to saw out casket boards for me." I said, "Mr. Petrie, are you gone crazy?" "No, be thun? ders" • that was a word he had • he said, "I know I'm going to need them before long. And if you'll saw them out for me I'll know where to tell them to go get them." So now the mill I was using I had bought it from him after he got sick. So I went over one morning • I was going to saw • I had a big log rolled in on the skid. And that's what was in my mind • to saw those casket boards for Johnny Petrie. But the way I felt about this, I was going to try to do this underhanded to the Almighty. Johnny wasn't dead then. And I used to make a lot of boxes for dump carts and you needed boards about 12 inches wide for that, for the sides of the dump cart boxes. And there was a fellow wanting me in Ding? wall to make him a dump cart box. Well, this is what I decided--that I would saw the log for to have the Almighty think I was sawing it for the cart box, but I was really sawing it to have those boards ready for Johnny Petrie's casket. Because the way I felt about it, if I was sawing this log for casket boards then I was go? ing a step ahead of the Almighty. The Al? mighty knew more about when Johnny Petrie was going to die than I did. That's the way I felt about it. And then just before I went to the mill, somebody came and told me Johnny Petrie had died last night. I went to the mill for to saw the log. I slabbed the log • 12 inches • and I started. I took off a few first that there was quite a bit of wind on. Well, when the saw came in and she was cutting the square part of the stick • she was cutting the 12 inches • now, you might think that I'm adding something to this, but the Almighty is my judge and if I'm lying he might hit me dead here. Every



board that fell from that saw split from one end to the other. Every board. I don't know, I think it was 3 or 4 boards. After I got into the square part of the log. Every board split from one end to the other, and the log was 12 feet long. I sawed in to about the middle of the log and I went in and shut the engine off and went home. My wife asked me what was wrong. I said, "Nothing." She said, "There is. You look awful." I said, "About what I have over at the mill. I bought the mill from Johnny Petrie and he died last night • and I feel I should have thought enough of him to have left it shut off today." She said, "That's not hurting Johnny Petrie." But I kind of felt in my own mind I shouldn't have had the mill going. So I quit at that. And the log remained on the carriage I don't know for how long. But after every? thing was over • they never came to my house for those casket boards; I don't know where they got them but they never came to my place • I guess Johnny never told them to come to me • I went to the mill awhile after and I started up the motor and I pushed the log up to the saw. I sawed the boards off. Every board that fell from the saw • there never was a crack in them. But the three I sawed for Johnny

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